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ABSTRACT

This dramatic reading was created from the questions generated by a class of drama education majors at the University of Alberta (Canada) and is used to describe a case study assignment approach to teacher education in drama. Education in a democratic society is underpinned with the willingness to listen. The mythology which claims that the gulf between theory and practice is natural and inevitable is hard to break. However, the situation challenges educators to bridge the gap in order to make what is said relevant and appropriate. This paper proposes that the voices of the teacher educator can intertwine with those of students and practicing teachers, creating a polyphony of acceptable voices which form the foundation of democratic education. Through the use of exemplars, reflective writing assignments, and focus instructions, drama education students were asked to write cases which documented an issue about themselves and teaching. Each case was to describe a series of incidents, use drama education theory, general education theory, and class discussions to analyze and/or interpret what took place. A crucial part of the case study assignment was student reflection about the incidents described in the case. (JLS)

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ED 401 245

VOICES FROM THE CLASSROOM: USING CASE STUDY NARRATIVES IN BUILDING REFLECTIVE COMMUNITIES IN PRE-SERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION

A Dramatic Reading

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Voices from the Classroom:
Using Case Study Narratives in Building Reflective Communities in Pre-Service Teacher Education

A Dramatic Reading
Compiled by Joe Norris, the University of Alberta
and Laura McCammon, the University of Arizona

Prologue: Initial Voices of Student Teachers

Laura. What would you do if...you have a student who is unwilling to join in or participate in any activities?

Joe. What would you do if...half the students really want to be involved in class, but the other half will do anything to create and maintain chaos?

Laura. What would you do if...the clocks are set wrong and you finish your planned lesson 5 minutes early?

Joe. What would you do if...a student continues to direct statements like "You're gay" under his breath?

Laura. What would you do if...you have a student who calls you a "Fucking Bitch"?

Joe. What would you do if...a student calls you a racist because he thinks he's being treated "different" from other students?

Laura. What would you do if...you hand out an alternative assignment and three students throw it back in your face?

Joe. What would you do if...somebody tells you that you're "just a student teacher, you're nobody, you can't do anything to get me in trouble. So tuff tit"?

Laura. What would you do if...your students get into the lesson and take it places you never thought it could go?

Joe. Yeah! What would you do if...you have a great time student teaching?

Laura. What would you do if...

Joe. What would you do if...

Laura. What would you do if....

Joe. What would you do when your Education students keep asking you, "What would you do if?" questions?

What you heard is part of an actual list of "what would you do if" questions generated by a class of drama education majors at the University of Alberta. Their voices, along with the voices of many other student teachers found in this paper/presentation, welcomed being heard. The students willingly gave permission for their usage; furthermore, they were delighted that people would be willing to listen.

Laura. Education in a democratic society is underpinned with the willingness to listen. Voices and the decisions made from them are hollow if those in attendance don't take them seriously. Although these "what would you do if" questions are hard to answer because of the way they are framed, we needed to address them in our teacher education classrooms because they are based on genuine concerns that our students bring with them.

Joe. My response to those "what would you do if" questions is usually (*using a stereotypical old age voice*) "When I taught junior high..." It's usually humorous and tries to capture the context upon which my decision in a similar situation was based.

Laura. My response is also reflective. "If I had to do it over, I might have done it this way..." This gives the students the impression that the unity of theory and practice occurs naturally as one acts, reflects on the act, and plans either to act differently or similarly the next time.

Joe. But it is not my voice I am really concerned about. I am aware that my twelve years of teaching may be labeled "irrelevant" since it has not been recent.

Laura. The mythology which claims that the gulf between theory and practice is natural and inevitable is hard to break. The bigoted term "the real world" runs rampant.

Joe. This situation challenges us, as teacher educators, to bridge, if not narrow, this gap in order to make what we do and say relevant and appropriate. If we can, our voices can intertwine with those of our students and practicing teachers, creating a polyphony of acceptable voices which form the foundation of democratic education system.

Laura. We have taken our students' questions seriously by turning the questions back to the questioners. Instead of hearing our voices giving them answers, our students need to begin to work things through for themselves. We do this first by asking our current theatre methods students to read student written case studies based on actual student teaching experiences. We now ask them--

Joe. "In this given context, what would you do?"

Laura. Strangely as drama educators, we have discarded the notion of role play. We have found that role play often moves to stereotypes and the discussions often focus more on accurate representation than the situation at hand. Role play tends to be valuable when the situation is general. Teaching, however, is situation specific and role play of these situations needs much more time to develop.

Joe. Rather, we have turned to the narrative form of case studies to assist our students at getting glimpses of the world they are about to face.

ACT I Scene 1: The Beginning

Laura. After attending the 1993 Western Canadian Conference for Student Teaching, Joe was inspired by Lee Shulman's (Shulman, 1993) presentation on how case studies provided contextualized information which practitioners found to be relevant. He wanted to bring such an experience to his students.

Joe. But where could I find relevant cases to bring to them as exemplars?

Laura. In the first year he used Judith Shulman's Diversity in the Classroom: A Casebook for Teachers and Teacher Educators (Shulman & Mesa-Bains, 1993) and James Henderson's Reflective Teaching: Becoming an Inquiring Educator (Henderson, 1992) as texts and asked his students to write their own case as part of the reflective practice component of his drama majors course.

Joe. Later, I asked a few students if I could use the cases they had written, rather than the ones from the text, in the next year's class.

Laura. They agreed.

Joe. If education is to be truly democratic, all voices must in some way be represented.

Laura. Joe's students then became consumers and producers of teacher knowledge as they both read and wrote case studies.

Joe. After the first two years, the cases were shared with two other drama education classes, one at the University of Arizona and the other at the University of Victoria.

Laura. In a democracy, personal voice is heralded when it can be used to the benefit of others. Joe's initial project is now being shared with Carol Miller at the University of Victoria and myself.

Joe. Through the reflections of Laura's and Carol's students, which they also share, we are compiling a collaborative text in which pre-service teachers are engaged at an international level, in making sense of teaching drama.

Laura. As teacher educators, we often perceive our students as going to immediate employment in schools while other departments encourage their undergraduates to pursue graduate schools. As writers of their own cases, we are not only preparing them for reflective practice but also the world of research.

Joe. By having our students engaged in the writing of case studies, they come to recognize that not only are their voices valued, but they are also needed by others.

Laura. This paper, then, is a collaborative venture, where the voices of pre-service teachers have been edited to portray explicitly some of the experiences of pre-service teachers and the meanings they give to them.

ACT I Scene 2: The Assignment

Joe. Through the use of exemplars, reflective writing assignments, and focus instructions my students were asked to write a 6 to 10 page case which documented an issue about themselves and teaching. Over time, the assignment was refined so that students were expected to also focus on their own personal growth.

Laura. They were asked to write a case which a) described a series of incidents; b) used drama education theory, general education theory, and class discussions to analyze and or interpret what took place--

Joe. The product was to be recursive in nature where theory would be used to critique practice and

practice to critique theory.

Laura. --and c) to apply their new insights to what they might specifically do in the future.

Joe. Early assignments tended to be general in nature, such as "I will work on building rapport." As the project continued, the criteria became more specific as did their application.

Laura. These general comments were replaced with more specific plans such as a list of rapport building strategies.

Joe. Most students followed directions and came up with a creative title for the case.

ACT II Scene 1: A Case: The Taming of the Shrew Student

Joe. The following is an abbreviated case written by a drama minor in my drama methods class. This class was the first group to read cases written by peers and then discuss the cases in small groups. Their take home exam for the course was to write their own case. Here we meet Mark (a pseudonym) trying to build a relationship with a student who seems eager to be disruptive. The relationship is that of a roller coaster, but over time Mark is able to achieve some degree of working relationship with a student he calls Karen.

Laura. Not only do we see his story, but we also see how Mark tries to integrate what he has learned on campus. Further, he makes decisions about what he will do in his own classroom.

Joe. The Taming of the Shrew Student:

Laura: I was looking forward to my student teaching. My student teaching practicum was at a junior high school with approximately 450 students. I felt positive and confident as a teacher. I was well prepared and equipped with my lesson plans. But little did I realize I would encounter a student who would push and test me to the limit. Her name was Karen and she reminded me a lot of Elizabeth Taylor in the Shakespeare movie THE TAMING OF THE SHREW.

In the first week of my practicum, my cooperating teacher was trying to complete a unit on radio plays in her grade 7 & 8 drama classes. My role was to assist the students with any problems. The majority of the students worked well in their groups; however, the odd student would wander around the class and disrupt other groups. When I told them to return to their group, usually they did with few, if any, comments. There was one individual who challenged my request; her name was--

Joe. Karen.

Laura. Every time I turned my back--

Joe. *(Speaking from Karen's point of view.)* She would sneak over to another group and begin to chat with her friends.

Laura. I told her that if she strayed over to another group one more time, she would be removed from class. Within five minutes, I found her again chatting in another group. I enforced the consequence. Her response was--

Joe. "I can tell we are not going to get along together." She proceeded to stomp outside of class and sat down.

Laura. At the end of the class when I went to talk to her--

Joe. She was already gone.

Laura. In their next drama class, Karen was absent so I was not able to talk to her and I would have to wait for the next week.

The second week started and I was excited and ready to teach. My cooperating teacher was absent, so I had a substitute with me. When my first grade 7 class arrived, I told them Mrs. Smith was absent and I'd be teaching the class. I totally forgot to talk to Karen. I started the class by telling the students we would do a floor concentration warm-up. I then asked them to spread out and lie down on the floor. There were a few moans and groans, but everyone did it. I had just started to work on a breathing exercise when some people began to make peculiar breathing sounds. Within seconds several began to laugh and then Karen said out loud--

Joe. "This is stupid."

Laura. I ignored Karen's comment, remained calm and asked everyone to stop talking. Then Karen blurted out--

Joe. "I don't know why we have to do this?"

Laura. I explained to the class why we were doing the warm up and how it helped to relax and prepare them for the following drama activities.

Joe. "We never do this with Mrs. Smith."

Laura. At this point, I remembered what my methods professor said about giving a student permission to "dissent." I was not going to get anywhere with Karen, and I told her if she wished, she did not have to participate in this activity.

Joe. She immediately stood up and angrily walked to the side of the room and sat in a chair.

Laura. After the warm-up, I told Karen she could take part in the next activity if she chose.

Joe. She returned and worked well throughout the remainder of the class.

Laura. At the end of the day, the substitute teacher told me that I had handled the students and taught the classes well. However, he had a few recommendations:

Joe. First tell the students what your classroom rules are. The rules help to establish where you stand as a teacher on a number of issues. It can be looked at as a contract with the students. If the students understand why the rules exist they are more likely to respect them and not to argue when it is enforced.

Laura. A second point the substitute teacher made was that--

Joe. "You should get to know the students' names as soon as possible. Establishing rapport among students is extremely important."

Laura. I felt I had started to do this but before I could develop a strong rapport, I needed to finish learning all the students' names.

The following day, I took one step back and commenced the drama class by discussing classroom rules. My next step was to get to know everyone's name. I was not sure how they would react to a name game since they already knew each other's names. But I told them it would help me to get to know everyone and serve as a concentration and memory game for them. They all listened as I explained the game--

Joe. Except for Karen. She leaned back in her chair, crossed her arms and rolled her eyes.

Laura. I quickly began to feel her revolt--

Joe. But she never said anything.

Laura. So I continued with my plan. The game required everyone to memorize the person's name and their favorite food beginning with the same letter. Karen was the eighth person in the activity of the 18 students involved.

Joe. At first it appeared that she was getting involved in the game.

Laura. But by the time we got through half of the class--

Joe. She was beginning to get bored. Karen began to gossip with her friends.

Laura. I then remembered what my methods instructor stated in class about "raising the stakes" to spark the students' interest. I challenged the students to see how fast they could go around the circle. I timed each student and the top time was the time to beat. I could not believe the change of atmosphere. It was like night and day. All of the students--

Joe. Including Karen--

Laura. Suddenly wanted to have a turn to see how fast they could do it. Some students wanted to try it over and over again. The class finished on a high note and the name game was a success. In our next drama class, I started a unit on theatre sports. My cooperating teacher felt--

Joe. "This will be a change of pace for them and will also be fun."

Laura. It was Friday and the whole class seemed to be hyperactive.
It took me several minutes to get everyone's attention. I could not believe how disrespectful they were. I had to literally walk right up to a few students and look them directly into their eyes and tell them, "I am waiting for you three to stop talking." After everyone finally calmed down, I reminded them about one of the rules we discussed and agreed upon:

Joe. When class begins and the teacher starts to speak, everyone else should listen.

Laura. They all appeared to agree--

Joe. All but Karen.

Laura. It seemed that she always had a response to my comments. This time her excuse was that--

Joe. "It's Friday and that is why we're all talking."

Laura. I agreed that it was Friday, but that did not mean it was a free period. I allowed three students

to lead the group in a warm-up. Karen was one of them. The warm-up went over quite well and Karen appeared to appreciate being one of the leaders. Next, I introduced a couple of theatre sports games. The class was working well--

Joe. Except for Karen and a couple of her friends.

Laura. I told them to stop talking and her friends did.

Joe. But Karen continued to talk to them.

Laura. I gave her one more warning--

Joe. But she persisted in talking.

Laura. I then asked her to sit on the side and told her we would talk after class. At the end of the class--

Joe. She once again left.

Laura. And I was not able to speak to her. I would have to wait for the following week.

The third week commenced and this time I was prepared for Karen. I planned to talk to her before her drama class started. I took her outside of the classroom and told her I was not against her or picking on her. I was treating everyone equally and would remove whomever it was that was disrupting the class after I gave them warnings. At this point she said--

Joe. "Why don't you just lay off?"

Laura. "I will lay off if you start to listen and pay attention in class."

Joe. She agreed--

Laura. But I knew she would not automatically stop talking. I pursued further and gave her more responsibility. I asked her what she wanted me to say in class if she started to gossip again. She responded by saying--

Joe. "Karen, stop it."

Laura. "What should I do if you still keep on talking?"

Joe. "Send me to the office."

Laura. At this point we agreed to this procedure in class. I felt good because we finally had an agreement between us. Class began and our group activity was running smoothly. I knew it was too good to be true. Karen soon lost her concentration and began to babble. I proceeded to say, "Karen," and before I could say the next two words, she said--

Joe. "Stop it."

Laura. She totally caught me off guard by saying it herself. All the students looked at her in confusion. They did not know what was happening. I knew and--

Joe. She knew--

Laura. And that was all that mattered. Karen stayed on track for the remainder of the class. I was extremely happy. For the first time I felt Karen was starting to work with me and not against me.

During this week I also started to teach dance and physical education. I had Karen's grade 7 class the next day. I felt quite confident that she would listen and pay attention. I was wrong. Throughout the class--

Joe. Karen and a few other girls persisted on misbehaving.

Laura. I gave them a few warnings--

Joe. But they ignored each one.

Laura. I finally split them up and had them sit in separate corners. At the end of the class, I spoke to each girl. I asked Karen, "What happened to our agreement?"

Joe. "That agreement was for drama class, not physical education class."

Laura. Her answer did not surprise me. We ended up deciding on the same agreement as we did in drama class. For the last part of my practicum, Karen and I slowly began to understand one another. I still had to keep reminding her a few times about our agreement, but at least she did not contest it. I do not think she ever did like me, but at least she was learning something. I felt that I had partially tamed the shrew student.

ACT II Scene 2: The Student Teacher Reflects

Joe. A crucial part of the case study assignment involves student reflection about the incidents described in the case. Through such analysis, the writer makes explicit to himself or herself and others some of the factors involved in the case and what might be done the "next" time. Here is how Mark made sense of his experience:

Laura. Throughout the student teaching practicum, I learned a great amount. First, it is extremely important to define your classroom rules. All teachers are different and have different rules. Do not expect or assume they are the same or that the students will automatically follow them. Classroom rules and agreements with the class can prevent many problems. It is also essential that you state the rules that apply to all classes. Students are "sneaky" and they try to use every trick in the book. Consequences must also be discussed and followed through for inappropriate behavior. Students know you are a student teacher and they will try to get away with as much as they can.

What I learned from Karen is that I should have spoken to her immediately when there was an issue, I allowed the problem to slide and thought with time it would vanish, but it escalated. If I would have confronted it on my first day, I would have set a better pace for her and myself early in the practicum.

Third, I also believe it is necessary to get to know the names of students and start to build rapport with them. Even though the students know each other's names, a name game can still be used effectively and can be challenging. Another way to learn the students' names is by taking attendance at the beginning of every class even though it may not be a school procedure.

Finally, Every teacher is unique and approaches the class in a distinct manner. I feel it is essential that before you do a warm-up, exercise, or activity, explain to the class why you are doing it and the purpose of it. Students need to know the reasons and what their goal is. If

there is not an end goal for the students, their activity is looked upon as not being important. Less energy is then put into the activity and the end result is an inferior product.

ACT II Scene 3: Student Responses to a Case

Joe. When students read cases, they can vicariously share in the experience of situations they may be about to face. Through reflection, they can plot their own appropriate responses. The textures of the case provide many of the variables necessary to make a decision and the students can now address their own "what if's". Such is the role of drama in using case studies with student teachers. They, in their mind's eye, pre-live a possible scenario.

Laura. From the case, their own interpretation, and discussions with their peers and their instructor, they can question all perspectives and enter into dialogue on possible courses of action. If all suggestions are considered, a multiplicity of options is available, enabling a pre-service teacher to bring a polyphony of ideas with them as they become teachers.

Joe. A student from the University of Victoria saw in the case a need to articulate rules:

"Out of all the students, Karen, the shrew, was the most troublesome, perhaps because she did not fully understand what behavior was expected in the classroom when the student teacher was teaching. If Karen felt confused about the rules of the classroom or the purpose of an exercise, there is a good possibility that others were just as confused as she was, but they were less vocal. Students are smart; when they see an opportunity to take some time to goof off, they take it. This situation certainly afforded them such an opportunity."

Laura. A University of Arizona student teacher chose to look at Karen, not so much as a troublemaker, but as an interesting challenge for the teacher.

"Karen is obviously used to getting her own way and is also very bright. She knows how to challenge and insists on knowing 'why.' When her energy gets focused on something positive she could become a real powerhouse. Her behavior does seem to be typical for her age, and should not get her labeled as a 'bad seed.' Frankly, the world would be a dull place if we were all complacent followers; it's the questioning that keeps us on our toes.

Joe. This last example of a student response, shows how a student from the University of Arizona contemplating student teaching applies this situation to what she might face:

"Much of what the student teacher reflected on concerning his actions toward Karen matched my reactions when reading this case study. First and foremost, a student teacher MUST learn the names of each student with whom s/he comes into contact. I know that I have a difficult time remembering names so I have already started to think about the first or second week of school. I have tried to devise ways in which I can learn their names not just through games or by taking roll every day. Second, I definitely have a standard set of rules and procedures I expect my students to follow; however, I also believe that the students should come up with the rules and consequences in order to be more effective in the classroom. I know that I can suggest other rules, if the students have not come up with them, in order to have rules that are comprehensive.

"The student teacher proceeded well in trying to accommodate for Karen's actions. The student teacher brought Karen's actions to Karen's attention. Because Karen was made aware of her own problem through talking with the student teacher, the student and teacher were able to come up with a viable plan to which both could agree. I think that by allowing Karen to be a major participant in the classroom activities also helped in alleviating the talking problems that Karen was creating. I would have been more apt to follow the same procedure, but sooner."

ACT III Scene 1: What Have We Learned?" A Theme Analysis Approach

Joe. What makes good drama timeless is repetition of themes which demonstrate the human condition. The student written cases were no different. They are rich sources of data which chart the complex map we call teaching. The writers of the cases also gave permission for their cases to be used for research into teaching.

Laura. Sorting their thoughts into themes provides another way of using the cases. This form focuses a number of voices on a single issue. Several key themes are emerging from the many cases that have been written so far. Here is a sampling of some of those themes:

Joe.. Many of the cases involve situations much like the one described in the "Taming of the Shrew Student" where a student teacher encountered problems from the students. It is not surprising, then, that a major theme that emerged from the cases had to do with **The Students**, specifically matters relating to class composition, knowing your students, the importance of being able to "read students", and peer relationships.

Laura. In a case entitled "Welcome Back Mrs. C--Dealing with 'Sweat Hogs'" the student teacher notes that students are often placed in drama who do not want to be there and this can later cause problems in the classroom:

"A quick hands-up survey revealed only 1/3 of the class (10 students) had chosen Drama as one of their top choices for complementary classes. The remaining 20 got placed in drama either because their first choice had been cancelled, an Ice Skills class in particular, or because there was a limited choice (Computers or French) in the timetable slot they had open."

Joe. Many student teachers, like the Mark who wrote "The Taming of the Shrew Student," discovered that they needed to know their students better. Here's an example of a student teacher in a junior high class who likens the students to the groundlings who attended Shakespeare's plays. The case is entitled "Macbeth Does Murder Sleep":

"I realized that I had to become Shakespeare in my own classroom. . . .I believe that a lesson plan should read like Shakespeare's plays. Just as Shakespeare had the witches to grab the attention of his groundlings, I should have a warm-up that grabs their attention and pulls them into my class. . . . Then once their attention is captured, we need to reveal as much plot, (or in my case background information) as their short attention span can handle. . ."

Laura. A similar situation is discussed in a case called "If I Had a Decent Assault Rifle":

"I was placed in a Catholic high school and I had certain preconceptions about students in a religious setting. Those perceptions were made short work of and I realized that kids are kids are kids. There was one person in the class, a male, when asked to write on what aspect of society he did not like, wrote that if he were to go on a killing spree that he would kill police officers. This, he said, would be the perfect crime because it would prevent his arrest directly if he 'took out all the police in the city.' He then went on to write that he also did not like women and that he would kill them too and that the 'funniest thing' of all would be to kill 'women cops.' I read this over and I wondered what exactly had I wandered into."

Joe. Being able to "read" students in the class was another issue explored. This is from a case titled "Guppies and Piranhas":

"Quite possibly if I would have had more energy in that particular class I would have been able to read my group better and realize what they needed instead of trying to go on with a lesson that was loaded for disaster. You have to be able to deal with times when your students are guppies--ready to be fed information and willing to go with your every directions.

and also with the days when they are piranhas ready to eat away at your lessons and energy levels until there is nothing left of you."

Laura. The student teachers discovered a second major theme that of **Relationships**--which includes the idea of negotiation (working for and with others). "The Taming of the Shrew Student," for example, describes how the student teacher negotiated a working relationship with Karen.

Joe. Here's another example from a case called "Stairway to Rapport" of how a student teacher thought about creating a classroom environment:

"The first two weeks of my practicum, I worked very hard at being the 'teacher.' This was accomplished through being in control of my classroom and having the students listen to me. The students remained focused, on task, throughout my classes and they worked for me as a result of this technique. I wanted my students to see me as a teacher and not as an equal or a friend. As a result of my teacher role, the students realized their limits and expectations in the classroom."

Laura. Another student teacher was not so proactive--from "If I Had a Decent Assault Rifle":

"The situation was followed by a brief meeting with the cooperating teacher and myself in which she cautioned me to be careful not to let them manipulate me like she saw them do that class."

Joe. Some of the other themes found so far in the cases include The **Context of Student Teaching** and the fact that the students are only student teachers and in the school for a short while. A fourth theme concerned issues of **Classroom Management**.

Laura. **Teaching Strategies and Skills** including the importance of planning and preparation, the need for energy, and the value of reflection emerged as a fifth theme with issues revolving around **Becoming a Teacher** as a sixth and by no means final theme.

Joe. As more cases are being written and read, more voices are added to this polyphony. Carole Miller, Laura McCammon and I plan to add even more. The next version to be handed out to our students will not only contain the cases but responses written by some of the student teachers, cooperating teachers with whom the student teachers have been placed, and methods instructors.

Laura. Each case will be followed by at least three responses and will conclude with focused questions to assist the reader in entering the continuing debate.

ACT III Scene 2: What Have We Learned?:
Student Opinions on Reading Cases

Laura. The project is far from finished, however, due to the positive responses from our students, we feel the obligation to pass on what we have done so far. Our student voices demonstrate the enormous value they place on this project. Carole Miller asked her students to write a short paper on how they valued the project and Joe Norris gave his students a questionnaire with a few focus questions. The following are a few of their responses:

Joe. This first student notes how the cases helped bring home the real world of classrooms:

"I found that commenting on the case studies was a very valuable assignment for many reasons. First, I was interested in hearing about some real life situations that student teachers

went through. Hearing the stories from people who are in the same boat as me brought the whole experience a little closer to home. One can not help but think, 'That could have been me. What would I have done differently in the same situation?' Second, I got a real sense of what the students are like in today's classrooms. Finally, commenting on the cases helped to confirm that I do know how to teach drama. Knowing that I am capable of diagnosing a problem and thinking of a possible solution helps to boost my confidence in my own teaching abilities. I now realize the importance of recognizing potential problems as soon as possible and dealing with them as effectively as possible because the consequences of making the wrong decisions can cause a lot of anxiety to all parties involved. What I found most interesting about the case studies was how confident most of the student teachers were when they first walked into their classrooms and how that changed when they were faced with the real test--teaching the students."

Laura. A second student found that the cases seemed to revolve around some of the same ideas:

"It was interesting to note how, in discussing the cases, we returned again and again to the same central issues. The most important of these include proper planning, an adequate knowledge of the class population, setting classroom rules, boundaries, and appropriate consequences, safety, classroom management, the degree of reliance on the sponsor teacher, choice of approach in work, and drama advocacy within the school. This is all excellent preparation for my practicum."

Joe. These last two comments demonstrated that the case studies reassured the prospective student teacher:

"Reading these case studies made me question what I might do in a similar situation and above all, reminded me of how the practicum experience is a learning laboratory--we don't have to be perfect going in, everyone makes mistakes. What I learn is what counts."

Laura. "Responding to case studies changes the dynamics of the methods class. Instead of being students, we are teachers, analyzing and problem solving with our colleagues: Those of us who write about their classroom experience and those of use who respond to these experiences. Just responding to a case study gave me a sense of community with my fellow student teachers. I will learn from their cases and they will learn from mine."

Laura. The student teachers at the University of Alberta also responded to the value of writing a case. Here's a sample of what they said:

Joe. "Writing my own case study, although stressful, was beneficial as it forced me to confront many issues I faced in my practicum. I am not sure that I would have taken the time to do so otherwise. It is a bit intimidating that others may read and critique my performance, but I hope my experiences and mistakes will help them."

Laura. "Writing my own case made me think a lot. The way that I wrote it was a lot of fun. I as glad you said we could write it as a little story because this way I could be creative. I get bored with the "usual" at the university sometimes."

Epilogue

Joe. The best response to a story is another story.

Laura. And if that is the case our project and this paper will never end.

Joe. Like Rocky and Star Trek there will be sequels as more voices join the chorus. We can have Voices from the Classroom Part II and Part III and--

Laura. That's kind of dry, how about, Return to the Voices from the Classroom?

Joe. Voices from the Classroom, Forever?

Laura. Valley of the Voices from the Classroom?

Joe. Son of Voices from the Classroom?

Laura. Beneath the Voices in the Classroom?

[etc. etc. trailing off to black or whatever]

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